



BEFORE THEY WERE VILLAGERS | C5
Jim Copeland was involved in educational building design and sustainable architecture.

5 a.m. 8 a.m. 11 a.m. 2 p.m. 5 p.m. 8 p.m.
64° 63° 75° 83° 83° 76°

OUT & ABOUT IN THE VILLAGES | A4
Senior writer Maddie Cutler shares observations from a day in The Villages.



WORLD NEWS | A2

IRAN DISMISSES U.S. CEASEFIRE PLAN, ISSUES ITS OWN COUNTERPROPOSAL

Pakistani officials described the proposal broadly as touching on sanctions relief, civilian nuclear cooperation, a rollback of Iran's nuclear program, monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency, missile limits and access for shipping through the Strait of Hormuz.

WORLD NEWS | A22

RUSSIA SAYS IT SHOT DOWN ALMOST 400 UKRAINIAN DRONES

The assault is the largest reported overnight attack on Russian regions and Crimea since Moscow's forces invaded Ukraine.

ONLY IN THE VILLAGES

By Taylor Strickland

Captain Jack McClure is a living part of drag race history. From racing jalopy stock cars against future NASCAR stars to entertaining crowds with the Joie Chitwood Thrill Show and meeting Big Willie Robinson, McClure has seen it all.

The drag racing centenarian gained fame in the 1960s and '70s for piloting a custom-built, rocket-propelled go-kart at speeds exceeding 200 mph and living to tell the tale.

McClure tells the definitive version of his story in "Captain Jack and His Rocket Powered Go-Kart," a new documentary film

Please See **MCCLURE, A8**

Top of the News

Sumter Remains Top Draw for Residents



Rachel Govola | Daily Sun

Eastport is among the southern development driving growth in the Wildwood-The Villages metro area.



George Horsford | Daily Sun

Local residents make their way into the new Walmart Supercenter at the intersection of State Road 44 and Morse Boulevard on March 4.



Rachel Govola | Daily Sun

Amy Wepfer, recreation assistant at Olympia Recreation, gets the crowd excited during the Dec. 12 grand opening of the recreation center.

The Wildwood-The Villages metropolitan statistical area is the second-fastest growing area in the nation since 2020.

By KEITH PEARLMAN
Daily Sun Managing Editor

The Villages' lifestyle continues to inspire new residents to move to Sumter County.

The Wildwood-The Villages Metropolitan Statistical Area, which includes all of Sumter County, is the second-fastest growing area in the nation since 2020, according to recently released data

from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The area is home to 157,772 residents as of July 1, 2025, an increase of 28,020, or 20.6% since the 2020 Census. Only the Myrtle Beach-Conway-North Myrtle Beach MSA in South Carolina has seen a greater influx of new residents during that time, as it grew by 20.8% — from 351,036 to 427,551 during the five-year span.

Lakeland, with a growth rate of 20.7%, is the only other MSA in the United States to see an increase of

more than 20% since 2020.

The growth helps all residents by keeping taxes low and providing a draw for new businesses, said Don Wiley, chairman of the Sumter County commission.

"The growth benefits everyone in the county," he said. "Look at our property taxes. If you go back 20 years, Sumter had one of the highest tax rates in the state. Now we're one of the lowest. And it's

Please See **THE VILLAGES, A7**

LOCAL NEWS

VA Report: Veteran Suicide Rate Edges Lower

By VERONICA WERNICKE
Daily Sun Senior Writer

The average number of veteran suicides per day has decreased slightly, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

The VA recently released its 10th annual National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report following a few months delay. The report analyzes veteran suicide from 2001 to 2023, the most recent data available.

"Veteran suicide has been a scourge on our nation for far too long," said Doug Collins, VA secretary. "Most veterans who die by suicide were not in recent VA care, so making it easier for those who have worn the uniform to access the VA benefits they have earned is key."

There were 6,398 suicides among veterans in 2023, down from 6,442 in 2022.

The average number of veteran suicides per day

Please See **VETERANS, A6**

SPORTS NEWS | B1

O'BRIEN PULLS EVEN WITH ZLOTEK, WHILE MORRISON PULLS AHEAD

Mike O'Brien is tied with Dan Zlotek through two rounds, and Petty Morrison also holds a lead at The Villages Golf Championships.

LOCAL NEWS | D1

CRAFTING GROUP CROCHETS BASKETS FOR PROJECT SOS

Since January, members of the Boomer Loomers have crocheted close to 300 Easter baskets for children served by the nonprofit.

HEADLINES & DATELINES

LOCAL NEWS

RGM RESTAURANTS TO OPEN RESTAURANT NEAR WOODLANDS GOLF COURSE

Jack Suleiman is opening another restaurant in The Villages.

The restaurateur is adding Luxe Steakhouse & Cellar, which will offer prime cut steaks and aged wines, to his list of businesses.

"It is going to be pushing our culinary team to a new level," Suleiman said.

The restaurant is currently under construction and will open at 1480 Craig St. at Woodlands Golf Club next to Blanchard Recreation, the newest recreation center opening today that is hot air balloon themed and features a game room, a family pool, pickleball and more.

"The community is growing, and we want to be part of the community as it grows," he said.

Suleiman also owns Redsauce, Glenview Champions Country Club and Mallory Hill Country Club, which are part of his restaurant company, RGM Restaurants.

— Summer Jarro, Daily Sun



George Horsford | Daily Sun

The new Luxe Steakhouse & Cellar restaurant, which will offer prime cut steaks and aged wines, is coming to Woodlands Golf Club in the Eastport area.

ALSO FEATURED INSIDE TODAY

World News	A2
Lottery	A3
Public Safety News	A5
Sports	B1
Local News	C1
Weather	C2-3
Recreation	C8-9
Lifestyle	D1
On The Squares	D3
Comics & Puzzles	D4-6



TODAY'S TOP PICK: DALE STUMBO AT EDNAS' ON THE GREEN

Enjoy refreshments at the beer and wine bar while Dale Stumbo provides entertainment with his live music.

from the front page

MCCLURE

Continued from A1

about his life, career and recent adventures. Created by Daniel Hagler and Emmy Award-winning director Krystal Alexandria, the film serves as both a biography and a micro history of drag racing and daredevil exhibitions.

Hagler first met McClure about five years ago at the Dragstrip Riot in Orlando. He was doing video and photo for the event promoters, and he wanted some slice-of-life footage of people at the event.

“The first person they sent us was Jack, because he always gets the front spot,” Hagler said. “Every time he goes, they reserve it for him, and he’s done a number of passes there recently, as recent as 2023.”

At the time, Hagler only had about 20 minutes to talk with McClure, but he remembered the interaction. Fast forward a year later, it was almost time for the next drag strip and Hagler and Alexandria were in the market for a new project.

“We kind of figured we couldn’t wait too much longer on this one,” Hagler said. “I called Jack up and asked if we could tell his story, and that’s how it started.”

Originally from North Carolina, McClure was involved in the pre-NASCAR, early stock car racing scene. His “Captain” moniker is derived from his day job as an actual boat captain.

McClure started racing go-karts in the late 1950s. By the mid-1960s, it wasn’t fast enough for him, so he headed down to Florida, where he heard there was a company selling compact rocket engines. The company in question was Turbo-nique, which sold dangerous rocket-powered speed parts by mail order.

“I put two Turbonique rockets on the go-kart, and they ran 140 miles an hour in a quarter mile,” McClure said. “The Turbonique rocket motor turned out to be too dangerous, because the way you ignited them is with oxygen and a spark plug and pressure, and it hurt a lot of people — not me — but the people that built them, so I quit it.”

About five years later, McClure got wind of a new type of rocket motor. The hydrogen peroxide rocket motors were safer and less prone to detonation upon impact.

McClure convinced a friend of his in Tampa to build one for drag racing, and he finished it in 1971.

“I made the first pass as Sunshine Dragway in St. Petersburg, Florida, and then we took it to Rockingham, North Carolina, in the back of a pickup truck with enough fuel to make a path,” McClure said.

The man running the drag strip was none other than Larry Carrier, the president and founder of the International Hot Rod Association.



Submitted photos

Florida-based daredevil and drag racing legend Captain Jack McClure is the star of a new documentary film called “Captain Jack and His Rocket Powered Go-Kart.” The film premieres Friday at Old Mill Playhouse.

Upon seeing what McClure’s rocket-powered go-kart could do, Carrier hired him right away.

“I stayed with them until I quit doing it in the mid-’70s, then I got back with the same go-kart back about 20 years ago,” McClure said. “I set some records that nobody else came close to within a drag strip in a quarter mile.”

McClure’s best time to date is 228 mph in under six seconds. It’s even immortalized on his business cards.

Despite his advanced age, McClure continued racing for many years. Hagler and Alexandria first started documenting him when he was around 95 or 96 years old, and Hagler personally saw him make seven or eight passes during that time.

“The cool full circle is that the first time he ran it was at the Clearwater Dragway,” Hagler said. “The last time he ran it, we got him into the Clearwater Dragway.”

In addition to chronicling McClure’s own achievements, the documentary serves as a veritable “who’s who” of drag racing legends. It is narrated by Brian Lohnes, the lead broadcaster for the NHRA drag racing series on Fox. It also features cameos from other drag racing legends like “Big Daddy” Don Garlits and The Rocketboys, which consist of McClure, father-and-son duo Ky and Buddy “Rocketman” Michaelson and Kurt Anderson.

“Captain Jack and His Rocket Powered Go-Kart” premieres Friday at Old Mill Playhouse.

For showtimes, go to tinyurl.com/mtxnccj9 or visit the box office at 1000 Old Mill Run.

Senior writer Taylor Strickland can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5334, or taylor.strickland@thevillagesmedia.com.



Captain Jack McClure gained fame in the 1960s and ’70s for piloting a custom-built, rocket-propelled go-kart at speeds exceeding 200 mph and living to tell the tale.

Hurricane Season Could Bring Fewer But Stronger Storms

A stronger version of El Niño could develop in the second half of the season and reduce activity.

By MILENA MALAVER
Tribune News Service

MIAMI

Strong winds across the Atlantic could make it harder for storms to form, potentially pushing the 2026 hurricane season below average, according to AccuWeather’s newly released forecast.

The forecasting service predicts 11 to 16 named storms, including 4 to 7 hurricanes and 2 to 4 major hurricanes.

Last year, AccuWeather’s 2025 outlook called for 13 to 18 named storms, with 7 to 10 hurricanes and 3 to 5 major hurricanes. The National Hurricane Center and Colorado State University also issue predictions.

Hurricane season starts June 1 and runs through Nov. 30.

El Niño is expected to develop this hurricane season, which usually leads to fewer storms in the Atlantic, according to AccuWeather. That increases strong winds high in the atmosphere, called wind shear, that can disrupt storms and stop them from forming or strengthening. The effect is expected to become more noticeable later in the season, especially after the peak around Sept. 10.

There’s also about a 15% chance that a stronger version, called a “Super El

Niño,” could develop in the second half of the season. If that happens, it could reduce hurricane activity even further, AccuWeather said.

But forecasters still warn us to be prepared for stronger storms this hurricane season.

“It’s very important that everybody from South Texas all the way to Maine prepares equally for each and every hurricane season, regardless of the forecast,” said Alex DaSilva, AccuWeather’s lead hurricane expert. “Even if it’s expected to be a slightly below average hurricane season, we can still see major hits across the United States.”

Exceptionally warm Atlantic waters remain a factor for the 2026 season. Warm waters fuel stronger storms and increases risk of rapid intensification, according to AccuWeather.

“Water temperatures across much of the Gulf, Caribbean and Atlantic are forecast to reach exceptionally warm levels again this summer. That heat extends hundreds of feet below the surface, providing additional fuel for storms,” DaSilva said. “As a result, we are very concerned about the risk of rapid intensification this hurricane season.”

NOAA’s National Hurricane Center will introduce an updated hurricane forecast cone for 2026 that includes inland watches and warnings, along with new storm surge alerts for Hawaii. These changes are designed to help both coastal and inland communities prepare earlier and more effectively for hurricane impacts.

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